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Kamal against deferring polls

But says BNP demand can be met if valid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said he is against deferring the general election in the face of any threats, but suggested that the Election Commission may yet consider changing the polls schedule if the BNP's demands are logical.

"The Election Commission, not the government, can decide if their demands are justified," he said.

He was talking to reporters after a national seminar on Dalits organised by the Manusher Jonno Foundation.

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SERIAL BLASTS

All 6 accused in Nilphamari acquitted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A court here yesterday acquitted all the six accused in a case filed in connection with the August 17 serial bomb blasts in Nilphamari.

The acquitted persons are Rabiul Islam alias Kalam and Faruque Hossain alias Amzad of Dimla upazila in the district, Sirajul Islam alias Sirajul of Jaldhaka upazila in the district, Habibur Rahman alias Habib of Gangachhara upazila in Rangpur, Wahedul Islam alias Sayem alias Sazzad of Ranisankoil upazila in Thakurgaon and Ehsanul

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Drug marketed to cure or kill?

Black foreign particle found in intravenous injection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A black foreign particle was found in an ampoule of Amibac 500mg injection manufactured by Popular Pharmaceuticals Ltd and widely used for short-term treatment of serious infections.

Doctors prescribe the intravenous injection with generic name Amikacin to treat infections of the respiratory tract, bones, joints and skin, soft tissue infection and recurrent urinary tract infection.

Sufia Khatun, 59, a patient with respiratory tract infection, was prescribed the drug by Dr Rashidul Hasan of Popular Consultation Centre-2 and one of her relatives bought the antibiotic from the adjacent Specialist Medicine House.

The ampoule of batch No 4 bears an expiry date of August 2010 and the monogram of Popular Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

When contacted over telephone, Dr Pinaki Bhattacharya, chief operating officer of Popular Pharmaceuticals, said he just heard about the matter but did not see the ampoule in question himself, so he does not know if it was their product.

"If it is our product, I have to say it was a procedural mistake," Dr Bhattacharya said.

"From what I have heard about the size of the particle [found inside the ampoule] I can say it will not pass through the syringe needle and there is no possibility of its entering the vein of the patient," he added.

Normally, ampoules are marketed after a manually conducted visual inspection. Popular Pharmaceuticals manufactures 4 lakh ampoules of medicines a month and has so far manufactured approximately 1.5 crore ampoules, said Dr Bhattacharya.



PHOTO: STAR

Foreign particle, circled, is seen in a 500mg ampoule of Amibac intravenous injection.

Although existence of any foreign body inside an ampoule is not expected, one could be defective among the 1.5 crore ampoules, he said, adding that if the inspection were automated, one in every five million ampoules could be defective.

No company can guarantee that there would not be a single ampoule among the 1.5 crore without defects, he said.

Graft alleged against Westmont

UNB, Dhaka

Former financial consultant of Westmont Power (Bangladesh) Limited Syed Arif Niazi yesterday brought allegations of financial corruption and irregularities against the multinational company.

At a press conference at National Press Club, he claimed that Westmont gobbled up Tk 175 crore from 17 local banks through "deception".

He also said the Malaysia-based power company embezzled a huge amount of money from the Power Development Board (PDB).

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Ex-mayor Minu acquitted in extortion case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday acquitted Mizanur Rahman Minu, the former Rajshahi City Corporation mayor, in an extortion case as the charges brought against him were not proved.

Earlier, a Rajshahi tribunal sentenced Minu to 13 years imprisonment on August 28, 2008 after a case was filed by Shamsul Alam Khan--a governing body member of the local Evergreen Model College, with Rajpara Police Station.

Later, Minu filed an appeal to the High Court against the conviction handed down by the Rajshahi tribunal.

Advocate Hasan Foez Siddique appeared for Minu in the High Court.

Bank borrowing leaps on 100-day job plan

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Though only nine percent of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) allocation was spent in the first three months of the current fiscal year the government borrowed 48 percent of the annual target from the banks in the first four months.

Finance ministry sources say the government had to borrow more from the banks as current expenditures including the 100-day employment generation programme, Boro procurement and polls related expenses had to be met.

The government borrowed Tk 6,277 crore from banks in the first four months, according to Bangladesh Bank statistics released on November 3.

Of the sum, it borrowed Tk 1,170 crore from

the central bank and Tk 5,106 crore from the commercial banks.

The target of borrowing from the banks in the current fiscal year was Tk 13,498 crore. The government borrows from the banks mainly to meet the gap in the ADP after exhausting the revenue earning surplus and foreign aid.

But of the total ADP allocation of Tk 25,600 crore, nine percent or Tk 2,388 crore was spent in July-September period.

The sources say a big portion of Tk 2,000 crore allocation for the 100-day programme has been spent, while the government has built up a food stock of about 13 lakh tonnes. A big part of the amount has been procured locally during the Boro season.

Election related expenditures were also met from the allocation.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Obama, McCain to work together

Bracket climate, immigration

AP, Chicago

The bitter general election campaign behind them, President-elect Barack Obama and Sen John McCain are seeking common ground on a range of issues in hopes of engendering greater bipartisan cooperation in Washington.

The erstwhile rivals met for 40 minutes at Obama's transition headquarters Monday to discuss possible collaboration on climate change, immigration, Guantanamo Bay and more.

It was their first meeting since Nov. 4, when Obama vanquished McCain in an electoral landslide. Last Thursday, Obama reached out to another former competitor, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, whom he is considering as a possible secretary of state.

Aides to Obama and McCain said no Cabinet post is envisioned for the Arizona senator. Obama has said he plans to invite at least one Republican to join his Cabinet.

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Hillary to accept Obama offer

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE, Washington

US Sen Hillary Clinton plans to accept the job of secretary of state offered by Barack Obama, who is reaching out to former rivals to build a broad coalition administration, the Guardian has learned.

Obama's advisers have begun looking into Bill Clinton's foundation, which distributes millions of dollars to Africa to help with development, to ensure there is no conflict of interest. But Democrats believe the vetting will be straightforward.

Hillary Clinton would be

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Building Sidr-victims built through bribery

Saudi relief reached them in exchange for Tk 5,000-Tk 20,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ayesha Begum and Prafulla Adhikari each had to bribe the local union parishad (UP) member Tk 5,100 to get the construction materials that the Saudi government sent as relief for the victims of Cyclone Sidr.

They are at least luckier than Pangku Rani, who has yet to take delivery of the goods even after paying the same amount to Abdus Salam Howlader, the UP member.

The three are from Pashchim Pasarbuniya village of Ikri union under Vandalia upazila of Pirojpur district.

The Saudi government sent the building materials for those who have lost houses in the cyclone that wreaked havoc on the coastal districts on November 15 last year.

Each pack contains six concrete poles, 41 corrugated iron (CI) sheets, and some bamboo mats and pieces of wood.

At a press conference in the capital yesterday, people from Vandaria upazila alleged that chairmen and members of two unions have taken bribes ranging between Tk 5,000 and Tk 20,000 to release the goods meant to be given for free.

"After we made complaints, the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) came to investigate the matter the day before yesterday. But he heard only from the UP members and chairmen and ignored us. After he left, Salam member and his men beat us up," Khokon Shikder, one of the victims, said at the press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) auditorium.

Khokon is among those who have yet to get

the house materials.

Prafulla Adhikari said, "After complaints and this press conference, we are afraid we might be tortured into leaving the village."

A local youth named Kaiser organised the Sidr victims in Vandaria against the bribery over relief materials. He brought them to Dhaka and arranged the press conference.

Bazlur Rashid Mridha, a freedom fighter who was present at the DRU auditorium, said Siddiqur Rahman Tulu Dakua, chairman of Dhawa union, took money from the poor for the relief materials.

"He already stands accused in two cases for relief embezzlement. Still, the local administration has given him the work of relief distribution," Bazlur continued.

Mujibur Rahman Mantu, UP member of ward No. 2, has the same allegation against him.

The aggrieved people accused the local administration especially UNO Abdul Ahad of backing the UP chairmen and members.

Contacted by this correspondent late in the evening, Ahad said he forbade the locals to pay anyone for the relief materials, but they did not heed.

He denied the allegation of supporting the local government representatives indulging in irregularities in relief distribution.

He however admitted that the villagers were attacked by goons of UP chairmen and members. He said he has directed the local police station to take action against it.

"But I am not sure whether they did it or not," said the UNO.

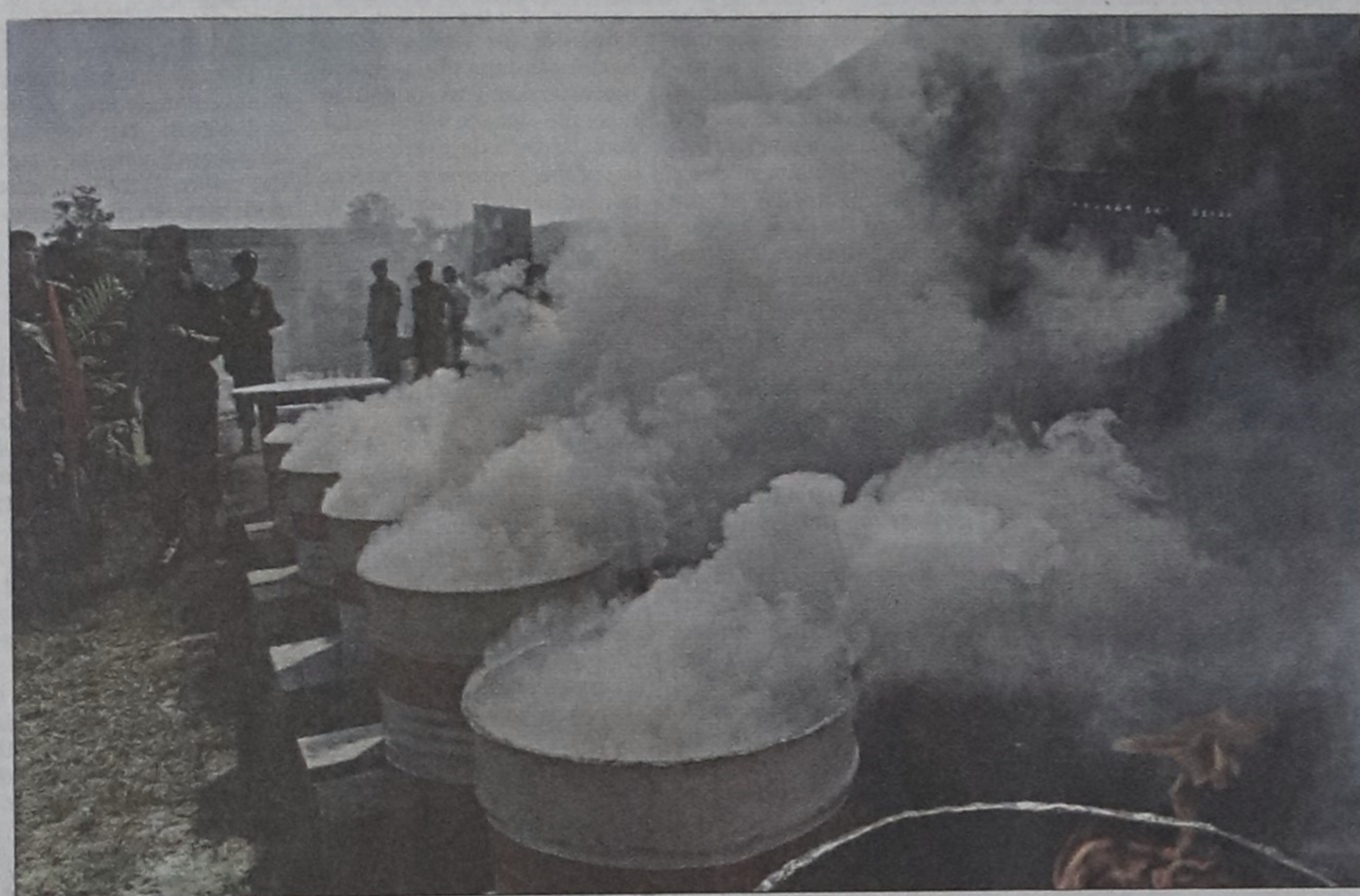


PHOTO: STAR

Rab burns seized marijuana on APBN ground at Uttara yesterday.

WAR CRIME

Hearing of civil suit against Golam Azam, others deferred

UNB, Dhaka

A Dhaka court yesterday deferred the hearing of a civil suit filed against 36 people for alleged war crimes to November 27.

Assistant District Judge M Ishtiaque Hossain passed the order after the petitioners' counsels prayed for time.

Among the key defendants in the case are Prof Golam Azam, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid and Delwar Hossain Saidee of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, and Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of BNP.

Earlier on November 13, three Supreme Court lawyers--M Safayet Hossain, M Liton and Rajib Ahmed--filed the case with a plea for prosecuting the 36 people as war criminals.

The plaintiffs also appealed for slapping a ban on their political activities and declaring them ineligible for taking part in elections.

Better rice seed can yield production revolution

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Over 8.93 million tonnes of additional Boro and Aman paddy production worth Tk 13,395 crore can be achieved every year if a slightly-tweaked traditional seed processing technology is used across the country.

The technology may also save more than Tk 55.39 crore a year by not importing seeds

from abroad to cultivate Boro and Aman on 1,10,77,560 hectares of land.

Rural Development Academy (RDA) in Bogra in a special research project titled "Good Seeds Initiative-1", funded by Swiss Development Company (SDC), showed videos about this technology to farmers in 10 villages and reached this conclusion.

The villages were of

Naogaon, Bogra and Sirajganj. AKM Zakaria, joint director of RDA and coordinator of the project, said the two year project was completed last year in cooperation with CABI-Bioscience, UK.

According to the food ministry, more than 44,3,102 tonnes of good quality seeds are needed every year to produce 27.94 million tonnes of Boro and Aman. The research

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

9 militants killed in Swat valley

AFP, Peshawar/Khar

At least nine militants and a soldier were killed in exchanges of fire in Pakistan's northwest while 10 people were killed in gun battles between Taliban militants and pro-government tribal leaders in the same region yesterday.

The military is waging a bloody offensive against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan's northwest, the army said.

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Kader Siddiqui left out of new poll alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury-led Bikalpadhara Bangladesh (BDB), Dr Kamal Hossain led Gono Forum and few other political parties yesterday formally launched a new electoral alliance named 'Jatiya Jukta Front' from where Kader Siddiqui-led Krishak Samik Janata League (KSJL) was kept outside.

Kader Siddiqui finally left the new electoral alliance due to disagreement over the name of the alliance. He was

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Tigers meet Proteas in 1st Test today

BISHWAJIT ROY in Bloemfontein

Bangladesh will face a tough challenge in an attempt to improve their performance against South Africa when the first Test begins at the OUTsurance Oval here today.

The Tigers batsmen need to show their mettle against the lethal fast bowling attack led by Dale Steyn if they want to put aside their past records against the Proteas.

The record absolutely speaks in favour of the home

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Prayer Timing			
November 19			
	Azan	Jamaat	
Fajr	5-05	5-40	
Zohr	12-45	1-15	
Asr	3-45	4-00	
Maghrib	5-21	5-24	
Esha	7-00	7-30	

Source: Islamic Foundation



Dust and car emissions blur the view at Shyampur on Postagola-Naranyanganj road. The UN Environment Programme says brown clouds kill hundreds of thousands of people in the world, especially in Asia. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR